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SUBJECT: IRAQI PM MALIKI URGES IRAQI CONTROL OVER SECURITY,
IN MEETING WITH NSA HADLEY

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki expressed appreciation for the President's continued support and pressed for greater Iraqi control over security, during an October 30 meeting with National Security Advisor Hadley and the Ambassador. He said partition was not an option under consideration by any Iraqi leaders, as the reconciliation process and continued development of democratic institutions served as powerful deterrents to terrorists and others opposed to Iraq's democratic experiment. Rather than an increase in MNF-I forces in Iraq, the PM supported greater emphasis on standing up Iraqi forces. NSA Hadley reiterated the President's interest in a regular dialogue with the PM on common concerns. He said that the President agreed with Maliki's assessment that the violence in Iraq was part of a broader conflict supported by elements and governments opposed to democratic change. End Summary.

NSA HADLEY TO MALIKI: THE PRESIDENT SUPPORTS YOU

¶2. (C) NSA Hadley expressed the President's and his own appreciation of PM Maliki's leadership and commitment to Iraqi democracy. He noted his visit earlier that day to see firsthand what it looked like when authority over security was turned over to Iraqis -- he was pleased with what he saw and was impressed with the demonstrated ability of the Iraqi forces (in Dhi Qar and Muthana). NSA Hadley reiterated the President's strong support for Iraq's unity government and specifically for PM Maliki, despite negative and erroneous press reports over the previous week injecting uncertainty in the minds of Iraqis over the state of the bilateral relationship. He said the President had also clearly received the message that PM Maliki and his government sought to assume more responsibility and control over Iraq's security. The President supported this objective and discounted the notion that the US and Iraq were "struggling over the steering wheel" to determine which country controlled Iraq's security. The President believed "better coordination with MNF-I" and "better communication between U.S. and Iraqi leaders" would allay the PM's concerns. The President hoped that his conversation with PM Maliki would be the start of a regularized forum for dealing with such issues. NSA Hadley then handed Maliki a letter, translated into Arabic, from the President.

¶3. (C) After reading the letter, PM Maliki thanked the President and NSA Hadley for their support -- there were no longer "any doubts in his mind" about the U.S. commitment to him and the unity government. The PM underscored that the interests of the US and Iraq remained the same and that the

bilateral relationship remained strong, no matter what some media incorrectly reported. Maliki agreed with the President that there are those who sought to create a gap between our two governments, but the "cost would be too high" if these negative forces were allowed to succeed in creating such a division. Although the struggle ahead may be long and hard, Maliki said, the US and Iraq remained together on the right track in confronting Saddamists, terrorists, and militias that were working to undermine democracy.

MALIKI: IRAQI FORCES CAN DEAL WITH SECURITY

¶4. (C) At the same time, the PM said he and his government sought more "determination and speed" in meeting Iraq's security challenges, which he believed would come once the US and Iraq reach agreement on how forces are deployed. He expressed confidence that Iraqis could ultimately deal with the security situation effectively because they understood the situation on the ground. The PM also emphasized his belief that the real battle is political, not military -- the US and Iraq face terror that reflects the policies of other backward countries in the region and outside the region. NSA Hadley agreed with the assessment that this represented a broader conflict between forces of moderation and forces of extremism.

¶5. (C) NSA Hadley noted that there are voices outside of Iraq that have called for partition of the country -- that there was no longer hope for a national accord or compact among Shia, Kurds, and Sunni. He said the President remained highly resistant toward partition because he had not heard Iraqis say they want that. He asked PM Maliki if there was still realistic hope for a national compact. PM Maliki responded that he hoped he would not be accused of being

overly optimistic or unrealistic, but that he still believed that Iraq was moving toward a national accord. He opined that this was why Iraqi leaders were not discussing partition, nor would they ever likely raise the possibility. He described the commission for national reconciliation, which he had pressed for, as example of an endeavor in which Shia, Sunni, and Kurds are participating together and which will ultimately serve as "a lifeboat to take them all to shore." Maliki argued that the reconciliation process, along with Iraq's constitution and elected government were important deterrents to terrorists and others opposed to the Iraqi experiment -- "they understand that we come from a position of strength."

¶6. (C) NSA Hadley also pointed out the debate in the US over the number of coalition forces in Iraq. While some critics of the U.S. Administration called for increasing troop levels, others sought a withdrawal. Maliki opined that the greater criticism in the US in recent months related directly to the increase in U.S. casualties. The sooner Iraqi troops could be stood up, the sooner U.S. troops could be removed from the frontlines. He said he could not promise an immediate reduction in violence, but asserted that if an Iraqi soldier fights and dies, he is fighting for his country which remains a noble cause. The PM said he sought increased focus on strengthening and improving the effectiveness Iraqi forces so they could take the place of MNF-I troops in a short period of time. He repeated his belief that it was not necessary to increase the number of MNF-I troops. In his view, plans to increase the number and capability of Iraqi troops would be sufficient.

KHALILZAD